

Effective Soil Conservation Held Matter of Compromise

By HARRY H. STONE, Instructor, Vocational Agriculture, Torrance High School.

Soil and water conservation in California require a nice system of balance and compromise. Most of the water which enters the soil, either from irrigation or rain, is removed from the soil by plants. Some water soaks clear through, frequently much runs off and some evaporates directly from the soil surface but most of the water is pumped out by plant roots. That includes all plants, from grass and weeds through vegetables and flowers and trees. So the main purpose of cultivation is to kill weeds, thereby conserving water. Of course the land also looks better when cultivated than when weedy or baked—at least we've been educated to think so.

But bare soil erodes very easily. We have seen that demonstrated annually along the foot of the Palos Verdes Hills. The U. S. Department of Agriculture Soil Conservation Service stresses soil-conserving crops such as alfalfa, which keep the ground covered and full of active roots. Which is to be done—save soil

and lose moisture, or save moisture and lose soil? With this conflict the compromise begins.

The simplest method on fairly level ground is to plow or dig deeply and leave the field cloddy. The many depressions allow most of the water to soak in, and only during heavy storms is the run-off serious. Special equipment turns the soil up in ridges and leaves a dam across the ditch every three or four feet. This "basin listing" is effective for most storms.

For land with a little slope terraces are built around the hill, with a very gentle slope to a grass or concrete lined over-

flow ditch. The terracing slows down the rate of flow of water, allowing much more to soak in. This type of work has been done on several fields in the Palos Verdes Hills.

The Soil Conservation Service has observed, however that bare soil does not continue to absorb as much water as it should. The pattering of raindrops has a puddling effect on the surface soil. This is particularly noticeable after a hard, beating rain. Most of us have had the experience of leaving a freshly dug piece of garden loose and friable, and after a storm found it packed, with a very hard

crust. This is true in all but the very sandy soils in Torrance and west of the city.

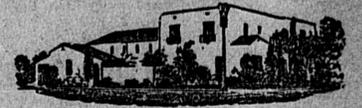
Now this can be prevented. Instead of leaving the soil bare it can be littered with leaves or straw manure. Did you ever paw away the leaf mold in a forest and find a crust underneath? The leafy mulch breaks the force of the raindrops, delays and checks run-off, and keeps the soil surface loose so that the water soaks in.

Here, into the minds of home gardeners comes an objection—looks. This requires another compromise. Well, you settle that one.

TO DEMOLISH BUILDING
Because owners of the building formerly housing the Christian Science church on El Prado at Border ave., believe it will be too expensive to repair quake damage, the structure is to be demolished, City Engineer Glenn Jain told the city council Tuesday night.

Miss Marian Lincoln returned two weeks as the guest of her uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Haskell of Beverly Hills, where she was entertained for

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Business As Usual Despite War Emergency

Business throughout the community has been continuing as usual despite the emergency which arose over last week-end, according to James W. Post, president of the Torrance National Bank.

"Christmas shoppers are continuing their gift buying in local stores," he said. "From the standpoint of the business man, the declaration of war has cleared the atmosphere. The uncertainties which have overhung the international situation are gone and the American public has become solidly united for victory."

"The continuation of business on an entirely normal basis after the sudden shock of war is an everlasting tribute to the people of this nation and the American way of life."

"The action here of local people and local institutions uniting in every way possible through established organizations to aid the military is indicative of what is taking place in all sections throughout the country. This bank has been and is continuing in an endeavor to do its part through emphasizing the sale of Defense Bonds and thru the making of loans for defense industries," Post said.

Per-Acre Costs of California Crops Recorded By U. C.

BERKELEY — Study of the per-acre costs of producing California field, truck, and fruit crops has shown that these costs are especially heavy in connection with bush fruits and berries, perennial crops, and subtropical fruits, according to a new Farm Management Crop Manual published by the University of California Press.

The Manual, written by R. L. Adams, professor of farm management in the College of Agriculture, shows that next highest production costs are for deciduous tree fruits. Costs of production are somewhat less for annual truck crops, still less for grapes, and least for annual field crops. The highest per-acre cost, \$614.59, was recorded for strawberries; and the lowest, \$8.57, for volunteer hay.

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